

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 10827 190611Z

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, TH, VN

SUBJ: VIETNAMESE VIEW ON NORMALIZATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF
U.S. AND THAI ROLES IN THE AREA

1. A EUROPEAN JOURNALIST WITH CONSIDERABLE VIET-NAM
EXPERIENCE WHO WAS ONE OF FIVE REPORTERS TO WHOM SRV PRIMIN
PHAM VAN DONG GAVE SEPARATE INTERVIEWS IN MID-APRIL PRIOR
TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE TOLD US OF OFF-
THE-RECORD SESSION HE HAD WITH DONG FOLLOWING THE FORMAL
INTERVIEW. IN HIS INFORMAL COMMENTS DONG WAS "VERY ENTHUSI-
ASTIC" OVER PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. ASKED
ABOUT MIA'S, DONG REMINDED THE JOURNALIST THAT "EVEN AFTER
THIRTY YEARS", BODIES OF FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE CONTINUING TO
BE DISCOVERED AND RETURNED TO FRANCE, IMPLYING THAT EXPERIENCE
WITH U.S. WOULD PROBABLY BE SIMILAR.

2. JOURNALIST FOUND VERY INTERESTING DIVERSITY OF VIEWS
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 10827 190611Z

AMONG VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS AS TO THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF
PROSPECTS FOR AN AMERICAN MILITARY RETURN TO THAILAND.
WHEREAS AN ALERT FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGED
THAT U.S. INTERESTS IN THE AREA HAD CHANGED AND NO LONGER
REQUIRED THE PRESENCE OF MILITARY FORCES, SOME OTHERS--
PARTICULARLY VIETNAMESE MILITARY OFFICERS, INCLUDING THE
DEPUTY EDITOR OF THE VIETNAMESE ARMY NEWSPAPER (QUAN DOI

NHAN DAN)--WERE QUITE OUTSPOKEN IN THEIR SUSPICIONS OF U.S. INTENTIONS IN THE AREA, ONE EXPRESSING THE BELIEF THAT THE U.S. WANTED TO FORCE THE VIETNAMESE TO HAVE TO FIGHT A WAR OUTSIDE THEIR BORDERS.

3. SOURCE NOTED THERE WAS FIARLY UNIFORM LEVEL OF HOSTILITY EXISTING AMONG BOTH VIETNAMESE OFFICIAL CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ELEMENTS TOWARD THAILAND, PARTICULARLY PRESENT RTG. THE INCIDENTS IN WHICH LAO RESISTANCE SEIZED TWO ISLANDS IN MEKONG RIVER NEAR VIENTIANE IN APRIL WERE SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE AGITATION IN HANOI, OCCASIONING FREQUENT REFERENCE IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS TO AN ALLEGED THAI PLOT AGAINST LAOS. EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT THAI SEEMED TO TAKE PROPER STANCE DURING ISLANDS' INCIDENTS THAT THESE WERE LAO INTERNAL MATTERS. SOURCE SAID THAT, THIS NOTWITHSTANDING, VIETNAMESE WILL NOTED THAT RESISTANCE ELEMENTS HAD ENTERED THOSE ISLANDS FROM THAI TERRITORY, TO WHICH THEY RETURNED WHEN LAO RETOOK THEM. THUS, RTG WAS CLEARLY INVOLVED IN THE AFFAIR, ACCORDING TO VIETNAMESE LOGIC.

4. THE JOURNALIST SAID HE FOUND LITTLE DESIRE ON PART OF VIETNAMESE TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE RTG, WHICH THEY FELT WAS NOT ONLY HOSTILE BUT TRANSITORY, AS WELL. ONE OFFICIAL EXPRESSED VIEW THAT IT WAS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT FUTURE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA WITH AMERICANS RATHER THAN TO WASTE TIME WITH THE THAI. FROM VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS SOURCE HAD IMPRESSION HE WAS BEING ASKED TO PASS ON VEILED THREAT TO RTG THAT THAI HAD BETTER NOT GO TOO FAR IN TAKING HOSTILE ACTIONS AGAINST VIETNAMESE (AND, BY EXTENSION, AT LEAST LAOS) OR THEY WOULD REGRET IT. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 10827 190611Z

5. IN A SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, SOURCE FOUND THAT ARTICLE HE HAD DONE EARLIER REPORTING THAT NEITHER MOSCOW, PEKING, NOR HANOI WILL TOLERATE ANY CHANGE IN LAOS (I.E., CHANGE IN POLITICAL SYSTEM) WAS BEING CIRCULATED IN VIETNAMESE TO PARTY CADRES WHEN HE ARRIVED IN HANOI. ONE OFFICIAL TOLD HIM FLATLY THAT HE WAS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT IN HIS OBSERVATION. WHITEHOUSE

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